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ABSTRACT

Exclusion of students from primary school has attracted only minimal attention from researchers. Exclusion has become an imprecise and confusing term. Exclusion can be of 3 types: fixed term (3 days or less), indefinite, and permanent. In England, education is increasingly becoming a quasi-market in that individual competitive organizations (individual schools) have replaced monopolitic entities (Local Educational Authorities) as education providers. This development is tied to criticisms and radical reform of the English educational system in the 1970s and 1980s. A quasi-market system is apt to provide more effective use of educational resources, but it may also operate in inequitable ways. Schools are in the position of being highly selective in which students will receive or not receive their services. Thus, a quasi-market educational system runs the risk of leading to the permanent exclusion of certain populations. In addition, fixed term exclusion is highly likely as schools seek to increase efficiency through discipline. A recent empirical study of the effects of quasi-markets on school exclusion suggests that the students being excluded have complex social and educational needs. (Contains 50 references.) (JW)

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Children Excluded from Primary School: an effect of Quasi - Markets in Education ?

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Summary
The paper will provide a background to the issue of school exclusion in England and Wales. It will toutline the background to the development of quasi markets in education and comment upon existing evidence about the effects of this change. The paper will then present research evidence about primary school exclusions in order to consider the title question. The paper is informed by empirical research into the issue, funded by the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) over a two year period, September 1993 - August 1995.

1.Background

"Denying a child education is probably one of the most serious things you can do."
(senior education officer interviewed during the field research)

A child in Britain today does have the right to some education, although the amount is not specified, but there is no right to schooling as such. In effect excluded children are denied school based education for periods of time, depending upon the type and length of exclusion. The irony of this situation in comparison with the current government interest in school attendance (ref. the plethora of GEST (DfE, 1995) projects) is not lost on some commentators, amongst them legal experts (Rabinowitz,1993).

The UK government agreed to be bound by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, in which it is stated:

Every child has the right to free education up to primary school at least (Article 28).

Schools should help children develop their skills and personality fully, teach them about their own and other people's rights and prepare them for adult life (Article 29).

(DoH (1993) A Guide to the UN Convention,p.8)

These articles connect education with attendance at school and with the broader view of education as preparation for adult life.

On the other hand children have always been sent home from school (suspended or expelled) and some of them may also have been slow to return to school and/or infrequent attenders in the first place. The reasons why children have always spent time out of school are varied and will not be debated here (ACE,1993). Exclusion from school is not a new phenomena, although the precise terminology now used is very recent, as will be explained. A lot of research interest into the issue of school exclusion has grown relatively recently and especially since the publication of the government study in late 1992 (National Exclusions Reporting System, NERS), which has been followed by intermittent media interest (DfE,1992). What is of increasing concern about exclusion is the recorded rise in the practice in the early 1990s. A recorded rise in school exclusion has coincided with the implimentation of the 1988 Education Reform Act and appears to have further increased since the implimentation of the changes in relation to exclusion brought about by the 1993 Education Act (NAHT,1994). The 1988 Act is credited with introducing a market system in education and the 1993 Act is viewed as furthering this trend.

The particular focus in this paper is the incidence of primary school exclusion, which (with the exception of Parsons et al,1994) has attracted relatively minimal research interest in comparison

with secondary school pupils. Primary school children form a minority of all exclusions (13% according to NERS, 14% in the University of Portsmouth's research) and can be overlooked in terms of educational planning and provision. However, our research has shown that they are generally a very vulnerable minority, both socially and educationally, with the additional vulnerability attendant upon their young age. Children with needs and rights as well as problems. Children who might reasonably expect some adult interest in and concern about their access to appropriate full time education, with a peer group.

terminology and legal framework to exclusion

Exclusion is a relatively new term utilised in relation to children out of school. Most adults will be more familiar with the terms 'suspension' or 'expulsion', which are much more accurate terms than exclusion (Education,1993). Exclusion is a term which has become more common relatively recently and particularly since the 1986 Education Act (ACE,1991). Exclusion as a term may be seen as more neutral and less threatening than the terms suspension or expulsion. Although exclusion may be a less powerful term than expulsion, it does still suggest a relatively painful separating out or differentiation between a child and his/her peers.

In practice, exclusion has increasingly been viewed as an imprecise and even confusing term, in that it covers a host of situations, some of which would have been called suspensions and expulsions in the past. The different types of official exclusion which have been in operation have carried with them very different consequences and are likely to have been experienced as very different types of event by participants. Thus until September 1994 there were three types of exclusion: fixed term (less than five days), indefinate, and permanent. The 1993 Education Act abolished indefinate exclusions with effect from September 1994 because it was believed that the very imprecision of the term 'indefinate' left this type of exclusion open to abuse (Gibson, 1994). There is another type of exclusion which is outside the focus of the research reported upon here, that is the 'unofficial exclusion'. Unofficial exclusions are the 'arrangements' or 'agreements' between parent(s)/carer(s) and schools, which in effect mean that a child has time out of school for a 'cooling off' period or sometimes agrees to leave a school altogether. Stirling (1991) has found such exclusions to be more numerous than officially recorded ones.

Only headteachers, or their deputies acting for them in their absence, can exclude a child from school. The right of headteachers to exclude a pupil from school (then referred to as suspension) is enshrined in the 1944 Education Act, which describes the procedure and power to exclude in the following way:

.....the power of suspending pupils from attendance for any cause which (the Headteacher) considers adequate, but on suspending any pupil (the Headteacher) shall forthwith report the case to the governors who shall consult the Local Education Authority (HMSO,1944)
(quoted in Lowenstein (1990)p35.)

The vagueness of this power meant that it was possible for schools to abuse it. The Education (No2) Act 1986 was an attempt to address the issues of proper procedure and common justice in the suspension and expulsion processes (Lovey et al,1993).

Although the 1993 Education Act has added some refinements and changes to procedure with regard to exclusion and has removed the 'indefinate' category of exclusion, the existance of exclusion as a sanction is not called into question. Headteachers still have the power to exclude and must be supported by the governing body of their school. LEAs can overturn decisions in LEA schools only. Time limits have been introduced into the management of permanent exclusion. The purpose of these changes has been described in the following way:

Exclusion is a disciplinary sanction, to be used sparingly. Where exclusion is unavoidable, children should be out of school as short a time as possible. This funding change (ref. to money following the pupil to next educational provision) *is an important part of our overall strategy to tighten up and improve exclusion procedures so that schools and excluded pupils get a fair deal* (DfE News, 54/94).

In this quote, the practice of exclusion is clearly placed on the agenda about discipline in schools, rather than considered to be an indication of problems or needs in the school system or particular pupils and their home circumstances. The 1993 Act places a duty on LEAs to provide education other than at school (EOTAS) and the money follows the excluded pupil (Circulars 11/94,17/94). Schools can now legally exclude a child for up to three fixed term periods a term, that is a total of fifteen days a term or forty five days in a school year.(Circular 10/94). Exclusion from school is thus firmly sanctioned in law, as is the part -time education of children outside schools.

quasi-markets in education

Many writers loosely refer to a 'market system' in education but the system may be more accurately referred to as a 'quasi-market'. Although some writers have questioned whether this is an appropriate term (see for example, Hudson,1992). The current organisation of the education system might be viewed as a market system in as much as individual competitive organisations (providers, ie schools) have replaced monopolistic state organisations (ie LEAs) as providers. It may be more specifically viewed as a quasi-market system because the public sector differs from conventional markets in a number of important ways (Le Grande and Bartlett,1993). Quasi-markets have been much discussed and analysed by economists such as Le Grande, therefore much of the language and concepts utilised in this debate derive from this discipline. Le Grande and Bartlett (1993) identify three main differences between quasi-markets and standard markets, two of which are pertinent to the education service; quasi-markets do not operate for profit and services are free at the point of delivery. Hudson (1992) would contend that quasi-markets require such a high degree of regulation that any resemblance to a genuine market is unlikely. However, whatever is the most appropriate terminology for describing the way the education system is now organised, the focus on budgets, marketing, results and competition in schools is very much the language and ethos of the market. Quasi-market will be the preferred term utilised in this paper.

2. The development of quasi - markets in education

criticism of the education system, followed by radical reform

For much of the post-war period, until the 1970s, it is probably true to say that, in general, education was viewed as 'a good thing' (McVicar,1990). There was also broad agreement about the need for a welfare state which provided for more than a basic safety net or safeguard against absolute poverty. This has been referred to as 'social citizenship,' that is the establishment of basic social rights to parallel those of civil and political rights (Marshall, 1981). Education is arguably the foundation for this kind of social citizenship, it is the foundation upon which individuals enter adulthood and the world of work. However, by the 1970s there was a growing literature of criticism from both the left and the right about state education. The left often viewed the system as it was as a form of social control which contributed to the maintenance of inequality in society. Such arguments first related to class and then gender and later moved on to race.

It was the speech of a Labour prime minister, James Callaghan, at Ruskin College Oxford in 1976, which is credited with launching what has come to be known as the'*Great Debate*' about education. Callaghan's concerns focused upon standards, both in terms of basic numeracy and

literacy in primary school leavers as well public examinations; and upon the adequacy of the curriculum in preparing young people for the world of work, especially those who would not go on to higher education. Concerns which have a familiar ring to them in the 1990s. The DES response to Callaghan at the time was a confirmation of their concerns in the same areas, in particular their concern that the education system was not sufficiently responsive to the economic needs of society. From this time it is possible to see the development of a more instumental view of education, based on the belief that the education system should be aimed primarily at meeting the economy's needs for a trained workforce rather than on developing individuals' diverse potentials. This instrumentalism can be linked with the prolonged economic crisis of the 1970s. Some of the blame for the poor performance of the British economy was laid upon an expanding education system which did not serve the needs of the economy.

There were a number of key pieces of education legislation during the 1980s: the Acts of 1980, 1981, 1986 and 1988. McVicar (1990) views these Acts as incrementalist rather than as part of a grand scheme devised and gradually implimented over the time period. Although the themes which run through education policy can also be identified in other policies at the time. Themes such as the desire to reduce public expenditure; the wish to reduce the power of local government; the promotion of 'choice' through a consumerist view of public services; a strengthening of management and a reduction in the power of professionals and unions; the strengthening in the power of intermediate bodies (governing bodies in the case of schools) to curb the power of professionals and local authorities. McVicar (1990) observes that the earlier Acts were to '*pale into insignificance* ' in comparison with the 1988 Act (p.137). The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) is credited literally with introducing a new 'ERA' into the education system.

The 1988 Education Reform Act introduced the National Curriculum, linked with attainment targets and testing, which not only created a tremendous upheaval and workload in schools, but also enhanced central govenment control over schools in terms of curriculum content and made possible the comparison of results between schools. The publication of examination results from secondary schools has led to the notion of 'league tables' of schools, in which schools can be judged by results over other criteria. The Act reinforced the notion of parental 'choice' and thus emphasized the threat of market forces to the less popular, usually less successful, schools. The power of LEAs was further weakened, with increased delegation of budgets from LEAs to schools. Thus, from April 1990 onwards, heads and governing bodies of all schools with more than 200 pupils were responsible for all expenditure except capital and certain collective services. ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) was also abolished at the same time, which McVicar comments upon as a clear indication of just how subordinate local authorities had become to central government (McVicar,1990).

The 1993 Education Act has been described as *'the biggest piece of educational legislation ever enacted in this country'* (Rogers,1993,p.3). It substantially rewrites parts of the 1981 Education Act concerning children with special educational needs; builds on sections of the 1988 Act in relation to the National Curriculum and grant maintained schools, as well as extending provisions for school inspection. Rogers (1993) views a desire to increase the grant maintained sector of schooling as at the heart of this Act.

a new value context ?

The overall effect of the changes in the education service has been to create what Ball (1993) has termed a new value context, an argument which could be extended to other public sector services. He describes this new value context in the following way:

The introduction of market forces into the relations between schools means that teachers are now

working within a new value context in which image and impression management are more important than the educational process, elements of control have been shifted from the producer (teachers) to the consumers (parents) via open enrolments, parental choice and per-capita funding. In relations with parents, the use of performance indicators and tests places the achievements of students and the work of teachers in a new light (p.108).

Competition in the education market is driven by the amount of money each pupil attracted to the school brings. The onus is now on schools to be attractive to parents and thus maximise their income.

Part of this new value context relates to the notion that parents, as consumers of education on behalf of their children, are encouraged to have the power of 'choice' in relation to where their child attends a particular school. By exercising 'choice' parents can in effect move funds around the system, in theory it should give parents the power to let professionals know what they do and do not want for their children. Schools can no longer predict the number of children they will be educating via a head count of the last year in feeder schools or population figures for their 'catchment areas'. Catchment areas have in effect been abolished. However, the notion of 'choice', whilst a real threat to the budget of schools does not always amount to much of a choice for some parents and in some areas. Furthermore choice is also a misleading concept in relation to what is legally offered, that is the right to express a 'preference'.

an assessment of some of the effects of the introduction of quasi-markets in education

LeGrand and Bartlett (1993) caution that the majority of the changes being brought about by quasi-markets in the public sector are very recent and therefore it is not really feasible to assess their empirical consequences for several years (p.13). What much of their work and that of their colleagues does is to undertake a theoretical analysis that specifies the conditions under which quasi-markets would meet particular objectives. One such analysis is given by Levacic (1994) who has focused upon four key criteria in relation to the education system: value for money, improvements in educational standards, greater responsiveness to consumer preferences and equity.

Quasi-markets are likely to provide an efficient use of economic resources in the education system, they encourage cost consciousness and thus attempts to utilise resources (staff and funding) in the most economically efficient ways. Yet such a system undoubtedly conflicts with more human considerations, such as staff morale, workload, commitment and enjoyment of the work and thus most importantly the quality of the learning environment for children (a glance at the *Times Educational Supplement* most weeks would illustrate the human consequences of quasi-markets in education).

There is potential for conflict between the changes brought about by a focus on value for money and the drive to raise educational standards, although the evidence here is inconclusive. It is perhaps too early to assess fully whether improvements in educational standards are occuring, although in terms of some measurable outcomes it is clear that GCSE exam results for example have improved during the early 1990s. Yet at the same time there is continued concern expressed about basic standards of literacy and numeracy. A concern which is largely unfounded according to the National Commission on Education (1995).

Although schools are obviously making more effort to 'market' themselves to future parents as 'customers'; Levacic notes that one of the peculiar features of the education market is the reluctance of schools to expand once they have reached full capacity. Bartlett (1993) shows that most schools

have a limited capacity to expand. There are often real constraints in terms of space and amenity if popular schools do expand to any great extent. There is also a reluctance to create larger school communities. The likelihood of disappointment for some parents and their children is increased by the drive to reduce surplus school places. Furthermore there is little evidence of any increase in the range of types of education available, indeed the content of education is prescribed by central government via the national curriculum. Thus any differences between types of school is largely based on organisation and resourcing rather than educational philosophy, method or content.

There is already evidence of concern that quasi-markets in education are unlikely to operate equitably, for a number of reasons. A major issue is that parents are differentially placed within the education market. Some schools are also in a position to select children and certainly the most popular schools will never have enough places available for all who choose them (Bartlett,1993). An OECD report (Young,1994) says that parent's choice of school is too often determined by race and class divisions. In Britain, in particular, there is a clear hierarchy of schools, further delineated by the publication of league tables of results. Class divisions in Britain are reported to be bound up with parental choice to an extent which does not exist in the other five countries studied in the OECD report.

For parents to have an effective 'choice' of school the popular and over-subscribed schools need to be able and willing to expand, without damaging the very service which has made them popular. There is then a conflict between this parental choice and a rational use of resources, in a context in which there is a drive to reduce surplus school places. Certain parents and hence their children are likely to benefit more from this apparent choice than others. Edwards and Whitty (1992) have pointed out that the exercise of choice by some parents is likely to diminish the choice of others. If for example there is an exit in the number of parents opting for a particular school, the diminished size and thus budget of that school will reduce the opportunities for the remaining children. This process is also likely to reduce the voices of parents able to make an input into effective change in the school.

3. Research evidence and discussion

quasi-markets and school exclusions

The way of analysing the effects of quasi-markets in education described above may not at first glance seem to have immediate relevance to the issue of exclusions, but in fact on every criteria exclusions might be seen as the unfortunate by-product of quasi-markets. These are the children with little or no 'choice'. The children who other parents want sent somewhere else, away from their children. The parents of more fortunate children who do have some 'choice' and may decide to exercise it, can take with them the funding for their child to another school. Thus schools may be penalised financially in two main ways by taking on the more demanding children; they may lose finance from the parents who take their children elsewhere and they are likely to have to put more resources into such children (especially staff time) than they are financed for. Such children may also inhibit the learning of other children and thus ultimately effect performance in the National Curriculum tests at primary and secondary level, as well as the league tables of GCSE results at secondary schools. Thus for all the 'right' reasons; efficient use of resources, concern for educational standards, reponse to the demands of other parents and the consideration of the needs of the majority, a school may decide to exclude a child. The dilemma for some schools in taking on such children in the current education system is encapsulated in the following quotation from a Head Teacher who was interviewed in relation to an eleven year old boy who had a number of fixed term exclusions in one year:

"I think we have sharpened up our awareness of the effect of the disruptive child in a classroom.....Local Management of Schools has done that. I think that's right. I think that I should be aware of that and should protect the other twenty-eight or thirty children in a class. But I wouldn't want to be in a situation where I was saying that I didn't want to work with a child because of the financial implications...There is a fine line between these two things, I'm saying..."

This was a headteacher of a popular suburban school who might be expected to opt for an easier life and the 'cream skimming' approach (of which LeGrande (1994) and others have warned) and which is certainly possible should the school become grant maintained. Yet, like all the primary school teachers we spoke to, he acknowledged that some children were very challenging to work with, but he nevertheless expected to work with such children as a professional. For the headteachers we spoke to, the issues which related most closely to whether or not they excluded an individual child were very practical and immediate, like the availability of appropriate resources for a child when s/he was being (re) integrated into a school, or when a situation was building up into a crisis. They also related to the quality and experience of the teacher available and the mix of children in the class. One teacher of a single form entry primary school spoke of the *"nightmare scenario"* of being directed to take a child who had been permanently excluded from school elsewhere, into a class with a number of very challenging children with a newly qualified teacher as the class teacher. The child subsequently spent some part of that academic year on an indefinate exclusion.

LEAs have had to become very cost concious because of local management of schools, they have very limited additional resources to offer schools for the most demanding children with complex needs. We have found examples of situations where schools felt they were not given 'the full story' about a child, and had to fight to get the appropriate resources from the LEA. Some social workers were equally critical of the practice of placing such children in new schools without the appropriate support. For example, the social worker of a nine year old boy, resident in a children's home and freed for adoption said of him:

"I am very surprised that he wasn't assessed formally earlier on. His behaviour at the first school was so extreme I would have thought it warranted assessment. I was surprised that he remained in mainstream. Maybe he needs to go somewhere where he gets ongoing assessment as well as help. Waiting around for a statement isn't going to help him whilst it's being processed....a child's life is too short to wait around for two years whilst a statement is done....I think they are going to try and send him to a 'normal school' and we can all wait and watch him fail again and I will be fighting that...I think he needs intensive therapeutic help.."

At a recent foster placement this child's behaviour had become so uncontrollable on one occasion that the family called the police, who took him to hospital. He was admitted to the hospital and had to be physically restrained in order to stop him hurting himself. One of his foster parents was a teacher at a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This child had no information about his circumstances or special educational needs in the education office, it would seem that this was due to the fact that he had moved around the country, both because of his parents and in relation to social services interventions. Nevertheless he was placed in a mainstream school with minimal additional support.

empirical evidence about the nature and extent of primary school exclusions

The paper will now briefly consider some of the empirical evidence provided by a national questionnare and by field research into the issue of primary school exclusions. The questionnaire obtained returns from 46 LEAs in England and Wales. Information has been collated on 3 contrasting LEAs and 265 children within them; in-depth case studies have been conducted upon

38 individuals.

rarity
Although our research indicates a rise in officially recorded primary school exclusions, they are (as Copeland,1994, points out) a rare event, even exclusions of the fixed term variety.

national estimate (Autumn 1993)
Extrapolations from national data reported upon elsewhere (Hayden, 1994; Hayden, forthcoming) would suggest approximately 418 permanent primary school exclusions during the Autumn term of 1993. This equates with an average of 3.5 primary school pupils per LEA in England and Wales.

case study LEAs (Autumn 1993)
When all types of recorded exclusions are included, the following numbers and rates of exclusion were found:

LEA 1 (a large County Council with over 500 primary schools)
- 1.3 per 1,000 pupils
- 134 individuals excluded, of which 18 had a permanent and 22 had an indefinite exclusion.

LEA 2 (an inner London Borough with about 40 primary schools)
- 3.6 per 1,000 pupils
- 30 individuals excluded, of which 1 had a permanent and 2 had longer periods of exclusion, known as 'aggregate' in this LEA.

LEA 3 (an inner London Borough with about 40 primary schools)
- 1.2 per 1,000 pupils
- 8 individuals excluded, of which 2 had permanent exclusions.

presenting problems
Physical aggression was the most frequent reason given by schools in explaining why they wanted to exclude a particular pupil. Although in most cases there was more than one reason given for the exclusion. There was a great deal of similarity in the types of behaviour leading to all types of exclusion in the case study LEAs;

	% of cases in which reason cited		
type of behaviour	***LEA 1***	***LEA 2***	***LEA 3***
physical aggression	55	55	57
disobed/disrup/verb*	29	21	45
other	27	24	8

* In LEAs 1 and 3 more than one reason is cited for an exclusion. In LEA 2 there was more routine categorisation of reasons into one main category per exclusion.

Physical aggression was usually between children, but on the occasions where it involved an adult could be experienced as a very upsetting and sometimes frightening event. The constellation of behaviours associated with descriptions such as disobedient, disruptive or verbally abusive may have been less threatening but were nevertheless experienced as very stressful situations, not least for the teacher but also for the other children in the class. Teachers often talked about the *"whole class"* or even the *"whole school"* being relieved when certain individuals were absent or excluded. Even headteachers said such exceptional children left them feeling *"deskilled"*. The large category of 'other' reasons for exclusion includes such behaviours as absconding from the school premises,

vandalism, inappropriate sexualised behaviour and racist comments to fellow pupils.

evidence of attempts to support the family and child

In the majority of cases families had received, or were in receipt of support from agencies outside mainstream education and health services, such as educational welfare, educational psychology, social services, child and family guidance and so on. That is there was usually evidence of concern about the family from a range of agencies prior to the exclusion. The most common agency with which families had contact, outside the education services was the social services department.

	% of families receiving support		
	LEA 1	*LEA 2*	*LEA3*
evidence contact with non-mainstream agencies	81	89	59
evidence contact with social services	37	33	34

It is likely that if anything the research has underestimated the number of problems in many families as well as the number and range of support services which have been involved, in that not all of the issues will have come to light in the course of the research.

underlying problems

Special educational need (SEN) was a significant factor in the 265 cases investigated in the education offices. Where children had a statement for special educational need (nationally about 2% of the school population), it was almost always for Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.

	% of children at these levels of SEN		
	LEA 1	*LEA 2*	*LEA 3*
statemented	38	15	19
in process of formal assessment	18	15	13
totals	56	30	32

In-depth case studies of 38 individual children revealed that almost all the children had some level of acknowledged special educational need, in terms of receiving in class additional support and/or starting formal assessment after their exclusion(s).

Almost two-thirds (23,61 %) of these children had experienced a permanent exclusion from school, although only a minority were originally investigated for this type of exclusion (8, 21%). Another four children had been the subject of indefinate exclusion or part time schooling, by the time of interview.

In addition these case studies illustrated that for the majority of children there was evidence of major stresses in their background. The most common of which were:

- family breakdown (33)
- multiple moves/disruption (23)
- evidence of violence/abuse in the family (23)
- time spent in care (17)
- involvement with police/ courts (other than for marital disputes, violence/abuse) (15)
- major accident/ incident in the family (11)

- disability or bereavement in the family (10)
- evidence of substance misuse in the household (9)

The educational needs of such children are not those which currently preoccupy politicians, although they pose a challenge to administrators in the education service. The imperatives for change in the education service, are not driven primarily by purely educational motives or by the needs of all children. It has been argued that the changes are driven by a desire to re-organise the system in a way which creates pressure to increase measurable academic outputs. It is a policy context which runs counter to other trends such as increasing integration of children with special educational needs and the reduction in residential care and 'out of county' specialist therapeutic placements. Such children are likely to make major demands upon schools which may be difficult to resource appropriately, partly because of the complex nature of the problems and needs some children have. Most notably, the competitive and individualistic driving force behind a quasi-market in education conflict with the thinking behind the Children Act 1989 which is based on identifying and addressing need and including children whatever their capabilities. One of the clearest criticisms of the effects of a quasi-market in education is the evidence that it does not promote an equitable access to and distribution of resources.

In a competitive system somebody loses out, some individuals are in a better position to take part in the competition than others. Schools have been put under pressure to achieve better examination results, or with younger children improvements in their attainments in the National Curriculum levels. This is occuring at a time when schools are expected to integrate children with a wide range of special educational needs, ranging from physical disability, specific learning difficulties, sensory impairment to emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has long been emphasized by teaching unions that the biggest single impediment to increased academic achievement in schools is the behaviour of a disruptive minority of children. Some of the children with particular types of SEN and/or disrupted family backgrounds are likely to be (very ?) disruptive in school. Thus the introduction of published league tables of examination results and other indicators of performance in schools has created a climate which is less likely to be as sympathetic to children who may not only produce no positive contribution to these indicators, but may also prevent others from doing so. Furthermore the introduction of the National Curriculum has allowed schools and teachers very little flexibility to create alternative programmes of work with some pupils. It was predicted by commentators throughout the 1980s (for example the Department of Cultural Studies, Birmingham, 1991) that the proposed reforms in the 1988 Education Reform Act were likely to further marginalise the most disadvantaged children and lead to an increase in exclusions. Stirling (1991) started research in 1989 on the effect of the 1988 Act upon children with emotional and behavioural difficulties, in doing so she was, like Peagram (1991), identifying the specific group of children they expected to be most vulnerable to the changes in the education system. Our research has confirmed these expectations. Bourne et al (1994) have focused specifically on the exclusion of black pupils. We have found more LEAs do not have reliable data about the ethnicity of excluded pupils than do. Where data was available we found an over-representation of African-Caribbean boys.

However, alongside and preceding the debate about the potential for segregation, marginalisation and exclusion in the education system as it was evolving in the 1980s is another, perhaps more positive debate, which relates to the potential schools have for helping to create social justice. Conventional wisdom, reinforced by most educational research during the 1960s and early 1970s, argued that academic progress, disruption and attendance are largely determined by pupil background. However research in the late 1970s and during the 1980s (Reynolds,1976a; Rutter, 1979; Galloway, 1882a, 1985) began to indicate more optimistically that schools themselves make a difference. Some research specifically demonstrates the importance of school organization and ethos in relation to how minor matters can escalate into suspension-worthy offences (Galloway et

al,1982). McLean (1987) and McManus (1987) show similar findings in their work. Thus exclusion from this perspective is not viewed as an inevitable consequence to a particular set of events, but as a product of a set of events dealt with in a particular way. Such research is extremely important in informing the development of systems in schools which are based on notions of natural justice, but by emphasizing the role of shools tends to give insufficient consideration to individual and family factors as well as the very real pressures created by education policy. As Richardson (1993) commented in relation to the proposal to introduce financial disincentives to exclude in the 1993 Education Act:

Schools are damned if they exclude pupils and they are equally damned if they don't (p.14).

The research which informs this paper set out to try and break through the impasse implied in this last comment, at least in relation to primary school children. Schools are not all responding the same way to the pressures of operating in a quasi-market. Although officially recorded exclusions are rising they are relatively speaking still a tiny proportion of all schoolchildren. Copeland (1994) utilises the government figures from the NERS exercise to show that in the first year (1990-91) permanent exclusions represent 0.035% of all pupils and in the second year (1991-92) they represent 0.043% of all pupils. Copeland queries the way the issue has been presented by the media as *'misleading and sensational* '(p.14). He argues that these figures hardly imply the '*rising tide* ' referred to in at least one *Times Educational Supplement* front page article (Pyke,1993). If schools were only willing to work with the successes and those who are more amenable, many,many more children would be excluded than have been to date. Furthermore, more schools might have been tempted to opt for grant maintained status and then later introduce selective criteria for entrance, than have done so as yet.

4.Conclusions

The research evidence suggests that many of the primary age children being excluded from schools have complex social and educational needs, there is no evidence in the research that schools ever resort to a permanent exclusion of such children easily, indeed they would have great difficulty in doing so under current legislation. However, the evidence does suggest that schools are more likely to use a fixed term exclusion in extreme situations, rather than other forms of behaviour management and discipline. At interview, many teachers mentioned the feeling that the range of disciplinary options open to them was limited and that they could not rely on the support of parents when attempting to impliment a particular option.

Quasi-markets in education undoubtedly provide a more pressurised environment in schools, although the league table aspect of this competition is as yet largely limited to the secondary sector. Although one of our case study LEAs had chosen to publish the results of National Curriculum tests at key stage 2 (age 11). Yet these changes alone do not provide a full explanation for the recorded rise in primary school exclusions. Aside from the issue that the apparent rise in exclusions may in part be a factor of better recording of information, our research indicates that a number of additional levels of explanation are necessary in order to provide an adequate account of what is happening and why.

Individual level explanations might for example focus on particular conditions (such as ADD, Attention Deficit Disorder, and ADHD, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder, see Roth (1995) for example for further discussion) or stressful life events which help to explain an individual child's behaviour (see for example, Chandler, 1985). Permanently excluded primary school children are extremely unusual, we need to look at such cases carefully and ask what (if

anything) would it take to keep or return such children to mainstream schooling successfully. Simply directing another school to take these children, even with hours of extra support may not be very helpful unless that support is extremely and variously skilled.

The behaviour which is leading to school exclusions seems to relate to ***stressful family circumstances and life events***. There may be a real increase in specific behavioural difficulties and disorders, as well as psychiatric disorders amongst individuals in some families and in some localities. In his recent work, Rutter (1995) provides evidence of this. Some of these stresses and disorders may relate in part to broader social and economic changes, such as increased family breakdown, unemployment or changes in patterns of access to public housing. Whilst primary schools have already taken on many of the responsibilities of family support, according to Webb (1994), we need to ask whether this is appropriate and most important effective, in terms of helping children.

Particular circumstances may sometimes be especially pertinent in ***schools*** found to be excluding children, such as high levels of stress, ill health (especially in the school managers) and other problems with staff, as well as differences in school ethos. The national curriculum is likely to be partly to blame, both in limiting flexibility, increasing accountability through measurable outputs and by creating additional stress in the teaching profession. Exclusion, especially fixed term, may be used in place of other disciplinary strategies in schools in the past (eg corporal punishment or detention).

A number of changes in the ***support systems to help the most vulnerable children*** may also have a part to play in explaining the rise in recorded exclusions. For example, the move to integrate more children with special educational needs into mainstream education may be placing unrealistic demands upon teachers not equipped or trained to work with them. Also the move away from residential care and specialist placements for children may mean some children are inappropriately placed educationally and/or socially, or insufficiently supported in either or both contexts.

In order to respond to the research evidence presented about the nature of the needs of many of the primary age children excluded from school, we need to recognise that exclusion from school is often a sign of desperation on the part of schools, rather than indifference. The situation may however be very different in the secondary sector. Adolescence may be an important part of an explanation of the behaviour which has occasioned an exclusion as well as concern and pressure within the school system in relation to exam performance and league tables. With primary age children the evidence appears to indicate that many of the excluded children are distressed and in need of support, they are not generally speaking simply 'naughty.' In many ways it is surprising that schools contain such children for as long as they do. Quasi-markets have focused attention on such children within schools because they often have to find additional resources to cope with them, under local management of schools; but there is not a simple relationship between the introduction of quasi-markets in the education service and the rise in primary school exclusions. Broader social changes in family organisation and circumstance, as well as other policy changes are part of the explanation. Yet whatever the explanations for an increase in recorded exclusions, as a society we need to repond differently to young children, who are often showing us their distress through their behaviour. To return to the opening quote, *'denying a child education is probably one of the most serious things you can do.'* A short reflection upon this quote is likely to result in the realisation that we should not let this situation continue. We must find a way to harness all the resources available to integrate young children more effectively with their peers in the education system, in order to give them the best opportunity to take part as citizens of the future.

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